













































## The bizarrerie business

By Isabel Colegate

CAROL SHAPIRO:  
The Chuching  
143pp, Duckworth, £5.95,  
0 7156 1454 3

PAULA NEUSS:  
All Girls Together  
141pp, Duckworth, £5.95,  
0 7156 1454 1

VALERIE KERSHAW:  
The Snow Man  
159pp, Duckworth, £5.95,  
0 7156 1421 5

The commercial application of Montaigne's dictum that an original work gives birth to five or six hundred others, based on the same formula has evidently been noted by Duckworth: for some time now they have been publishing short, cheap novels, more or less after Beryl Bainbridge. The chief beneficiaries have been women writers of short first novels, with themes tending to exploit the more bizarre and unexpected aspects of the human, and particularly the feminine, condition. The formula, though, has been gradually modified. Three first novels published last autumn, despite their brevity (the longest has only 159 pages), seem to show a slight back towards an older tradition of literary fiction.

Carol Shapiro's *The Chuching* is the bluest, and conceals a vein in a small village on the borders of Shropshire and Wales when the Vicar is declared redundant by the Church authorities, and the District Nurse (who happens to be a witch) takes over the church services. There are rather too many improbabilities for a narrative which lacks the imaginative power to be true fantasy, and there are occasional infelicities of language. Carol Shapiro

has a forthright, earthy style which is sometimes effective—as when she is describing with understanding the unromantic attitudes towards spring of her stocky and inefficient country clerics—but at other times can be rather heavily frolicsome and at other times again merely inadequate ("the smell was a hit niffy"). This is nevertheless a spirited tale, and the portrait of the Vicar's wife—scattered-brained, disappointed, conscious of her failings, but with her heart in the right place—is a sympathetic one.

*All Girls Together* by Paula Neuss is a school story. There is little indication as to time or place, but the school seems too repressive to be contemporary. There are "legs" and "Mene" and a dance to which no men, even brothers, may be asked; the girls must dance with the mistresses. There is a reference to a 35-year-old man's having been in the Air Force and having "no genuine experience of real members of the opposite sex", and to a young girl's having been at Oxford when there was a ratio of seven men to one girl, so it must be set somewhere in the 1950s or early 1960s. Clever, unhappy Betty has a much more successful and popular older friend, Ellen. Miss Emberton Smith, the Art Mistress, whose favourite pupil is Ellen, is jealous of the relationship and particularly of the authority not merely to suggest to the girls that they see less of each other but virtually to forbid them to speak to each other, which seems somewhat improbable in view of the fact that there have been no impositions of actual Vice. Authority arbitrarily declares that one of the girls is to give up her role in the school play. Ellen's unwillingness to be the one to do this contributes towards Betty's gradual recognition of her friend's selfishness.

A young teacher who lives outside the school and actually gets engaged to be married to a man helps Betty to feel less oppressed by the school atmosphere, but the confrontation which seems about

to precipitate a crisis when Betty's brother Martin forces on her entry into the school dance and addresses Miss Emberton Smith in an aggressive manner comes to nothing. Someone rings the fire alarm. Martin sends a message to the girls to say he is sorry but he thought he had better go. Betty's restlessness turns out to be attributable to the fact that she was starting the curse, and Miss Emberton Smith decides to ask her own brother to come and live with her and her friend on the grounds that "we could do with a man about the place". The awfulness of a collection of females without this latter amenity is mentioned rather than positively brought to life.

Valerie Kershaw's *The Snow Man* is about a young wife who runs away from prospective motherhood and disappears. She is found by a man who has invited her over for coffee and some of the other women on the estate had congregated in her lounge-diner. It was a room like a corridor, really, and sometimes slept drilled into the passage, the pictures on the wall, the fish dried too, glowing early in the tank by the television. Having crashed her car, she struggles through the snow on a lonely hillside in the Pennines to find a house, apparently empty, but with a small, ready and still young woman on the table. She eventually discovers that she is snowed out with a murderer, who attracts as well as frightens her. Remembering long walks on this hill with her father, she is able, having made her escape, to lead the murderer to his death in a glory-hole in an ancient ring of stones. The episode makes her feel that in using knowledge passed on to her by her father before he abandoned her and her mother, she has achieved a necessary acceptance of both of him and of herself, and she feels free to go back to her conventional life without the fear of being trepanned by it. It is not quite clear why this emotional change should be the consequence of the events described; but the novel has vividly been strongly felt.

## Concocting erotica

By Patricia Craig

JOHN MCGAHERN:  
The Pornographer  
252pp, Faber, £4.95,  
0 571 11431 8

The gloom which permeated John McGahern's earlier novels is beginning to lift. It has been transformed into a reasonable despondency and flatness, tempered with irony—no longer a terrible Irish seariness and vacancy of spirit. Irish malevolence is a quality which used to be associated with despondency, greed, isolation, the bleak landscape of the west; John McGahern has stripped it of all the romance inherent in these images and brought it down to the level of boredom, disillusion and pain. His method makes for an increase in realism, but it carries its own limitations: one of these is the danger of evoking tedium.

In *The Pornographer*, however, a comic element has been allowed in, which is none the less effective for being muted. The narrator is a young man who conceals erotic serials for a Dublin magazine. "My characters were not even people I did not even give them names," he says; but in fact it is he and his woman friend who are not named, in a deliberate attempt to bring them close to the reader. The identifying mask, established by the author's editor, Maloney recognises when he labels the porning couple Colonel Grimshaw and Miss Carnichael. "We'd risk turning our readers off if there was a hint that it might be a favourite uncle or niece they imagined," says Godawful Thistle with.

Distance is an important facet of a novel whose hero is unusually fastidious and withdrawn. His life is posed between the cancer ward of a Dublin hospital where his aunt is dying, and the room from which he has scooped "the best lot of day" full of papers covered with illegible handwriting. He moves to keep a proper distance between

himself and his neighbours, his country upbringing, his own erotic impulses. In a moment of impudence, however, he brings home from a dance-hall a 38-year-old semi-virgin, a woman with Catholic memories ("...all those years, making the bed, the Legion of Mary") and a Catholic's aversion to birth control. It soon becomes clear that her objective is marriage.

There is always something ludicrous in the dream of emotional pursuit, with the profitless optimism of one person externally opposed to the disengagement of the other. Love, inflicted on an unwilling collaborator, becomes an irritation, an intrusion. Here the woman suffers for lacking a sense of reality, a touching cynicism. Her ever-shedding outer garment of sincerity, it is not long before she is merely a caricature, with her furtive assertions: "everything that happened was basically good, because both of us were good people".

The conditions are right for an infelicitous pregnancy, which is duly initiated on a trip up the Shannon. Meanwhile, the engaging antics of the Colonel and Miss Carnichael, and soon they too are bound for the Shannon, where the futile business is resumed with cynicism, and the author writes: "The conditions about the role of pornography in Irish life, posing an audience to be proternally inflated that it would let it rise out of a green tree in Cethamagah. There is Irish puritanism on the one hand, and on the other, a tradition of sexual and verbal abuse which has been plied in the Celtic twilight century past. Brian Merlynn between these two contradictory conduct flourishes."

It is his thirdy third, the woman tells him, that creates in the young man a "disaffection, a lack of feeling. His mind is not in the game, it is placed at last in the coffin, the place of a woman of like condition, the despatched to London, awaits a book for the ordinary."

Christmas confluence. "Birth and copulation, and death," in T. S. Eliot's phrase—the great fundamental—are endlessly associated, rearranged and rehearsed. "Nobody would play the slightest attention to you, when a baby is born in a coffin," in this misfortunate country. They'd think you couldn't afford a pen," says Maloney the flamboyant, the show-off.

And this brings us back to the crucial theme: distortions in outlook and behaviour engendered in a country which makes its baby-choked its moral code. McGahern always writes well about the state of being Irish, its special deprivations and deprivations. It is only with the London episodes, in this novel as in the last one, that the clear, dispassionate style is invaded by a disquieting cynicism. The lady's English experiences, recounted in the narrator, read like a magazine article; we suppose that she is indulging in a daydream of her own devising, but if this is the case it is not made explicit. Just for a moment, the author's detachment seems to have slipped; instead of organizing his material so that it appears to absorb complexity, he has allowed it to remain flat. But this is the only notable weakness in a novel which succeeds beautifully in doing what it sets out to do: to record, and illustrate, varieties of disaffection.

In many romantic novels a teacher from the city, who has been created in love, takes up a post in a remote Scottish village and catches the eye of the young lady. Rosa Conway, the heroine of Elizabeth Kyle's *Peat Dunes*, is a 38-year-old, full of some of these requirements by being young, virtuous and comely, but she is not quite in love with Charles Cunningham, who is soon murdered by his treacherous uncle. The community of Ardnaman plays its part in the shape of the old, accomplished, Miss Ellen Jordan and Mrs Johnston at the big house, and various gossiping locals who are interested in Rosa's "unwedded" fiancée. An intricate, well-worked-out plot and an atmosphere of the ordinary. J. D.

The University of Leiden invites applications for a vacancy at the level of

### medewerker (le klas)

(vacancy number 9-547/2597) in the Department of Language and Literature of Spain, Portugal and Latin America.

#### Job description

- To provide instruction (chiefly at the undergraduate level) on 19th and 20th century Spanish American literature, with emphasis on Mexico and the Caribbean area;
- to supervise papers (both graduate and undergraduate) as well as Master's Essays;
- to undertake research in the above-mentioned field.

#### Requirements

- A doctoral diploma (M.A.) in Spanish language and literature or an equivalent degree;
- willingness to share in the current instruction and research programme set up for the field, as well as to take part in existing interdisciplinary contacts and endeavours (history and sociology of Latin America, art history of Central America);
- readiness to assume administrative responsibilities, as required.

Preference will be given to candidates with experience in both teaching and research. Candidates who are not native speakers of Dutch shall qualify for permanent employment only if, after the customary period of temporary employment, they demonstrate an adequate command of the Dutch language.

Further information can be obtained from Prof. Dr. J. Lechner, telephone 071-549511. Written applications, accompanied by a curriculum vitae, a list of publications, and the names of two (2) referees, should be sent within two weeks from the appearance of this advertisement to the Hoofd Dienst Personeel en Welzijn, Stilleweg 48, 2312 AV Leiden, The Netherlands, with an indication, on both letter and envelope, of the corresponding vacancy number.

Employment will take place within the hierarchy of wetenschappelijk medewerker. Salary range: Dfl. 2,987,- to Dfl. 6,211,- gross.

## Manager

### Library and Information Services

Applications are invited for the above post, located at the headquarters of the Engineering Industry Training Board in Watford.

The Library and Information Service is part of the Research Division of the Board, and the Manager reports directly to the Head of Research. The person appointed will be responsible for all aspects of the library service, including supervision of four professional and five clerical staff. He or she will also be expected to develop the service in relation to the Board's objectives and the work of the Board itself.

Applicants, male or female, should have at least five years' special library experience, come of which should be at management level. A knowledge of the fields covered by the Board's library (Industrial training, economics, manpower, further education, statistics, behavioural sciences, management) is desirable.

Applicants should hold a professional qualification in library science and have Chartered Librarian status.

Salary scale: £3,438 to £7,885 per annum plus 2218 London Allowance; 56p per day London vouchers. Contributory pension scheme. Twenty days annual leave increasing to 25 days with service.

Applicants including curriculum vitae should be sent to the Personnel Officer in any case not later than 15th February 1980.

Engineering Industry Training Board  
Mrs. D. L. Gifford,  
Personnel Officer,  
41, Clarendon Road,  
Watford WD1 1HS.

**ETIB**

### CITY OF LIVERPOOL LIVERPOOL CITY LIBRARIES

#### ASSISTANT CITY LIBRARIAN

(HEAD OF BIBLIOGRAPHICAL SERVICES)  
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Applications are invited from Chartered Librarians with a wide and relevant experience in the organisation and management of a large public library system. The successful candidate will be responsible for the day-to-day running of the library service, including the supervision of staff, the management of the budget, and the development of the library service. The successful candidate will also be responsible for the development of the library service in relation to the City of Liverpool's objectives and the work of the City of Liverpool itself.

## CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

### Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine Director

The Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, which houses the foremost library in the world in this field, is a centre for research and postgraduate training in the history of medicine and associated sciences, closely linked through its Academic Unit with University College London. It also has a continuing association with the Science Museum through its extensive and important museum holdings, now transferred on indefinite loan to the Science Museum. In addition to the postgraduate research and teaching activities of its own staff, it contributes to undergraduate teaching through its link with University College London, it makes provision for visiting scholars, and grants are available to support research projects from the Wellcome Trust, whose Trustees are responsible for the entire funding of the Institute.

The Trustees invite applications for the post of Director. The person appointed will be responsible both for the academic activities of the Institute and for its administrative management, and will be expected

to develop the Institute as a leading centre of research and teaching in the history of medicine and the medical sciences. The successful applicant will be a medical historian of international distinction in research, who should have shown evidence of ability to attract new talent to the field, form close associations with the medical profession, and be able to lead and administer an institution of this type.

The appointment will be made in association with University College London, and the person appointed will be eligible for honorary academic status. The salary will be on the university professional scale, plus a responsibility allowance, and will be subject to negotiation. All enquiries and applications, which should include a curriculum vitae and the names of two referees, should be addressed to: The Director, The Wellcome Trust, 1 Park Square West, London NW1 4AL.

Completed applications must be received by 28th March 1980.

The Wellcome Trust

### Cheshire

#### Libraries and Museums

##### LIBRARIAN

AP4/5 £4844/£5547 per annum. We are looking for a Chartered Librarian to join our professional team at Crews. The person appointed will have the responsibility for the management of the reference and local history collections, providing a community information service and helping to develop a technical information service for local commercial and industrial undertakings. Applicants should have some experience of this kind of work, and be prepared to contribute to the overall development of the service outside their main specialism.

##### LIBRARIAN

AP2/3 £3585/£4533 per annum. Widnes is an increasingly busy library with a professional team of four people. We are looking for someone who is professionally qualified to be involved in all aspects of our service to the community including stock, lending, reference, local history and sound recording. Applicants should have a special interest in developing work with children. The person appointed should have an understanding of and interest in young people and have the enthusiasm and ability to initiate a programme of children's activities in the library.

Further details and application form for the above posts from the Personnel Officer, Cheshire County Council, Cheshire Libraries and Museums, 51 Hoole Road, Hoole, Chester, CH2 3NG. Tel: Chester 20055. Closing date: 23rd January, 1980.

### UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN

Applications are invited by the Governing Body of the College for the following full-time permanent appointment:

#### Professorship of Law

Prior to application, further information (including application forms) should be obtained from the University of Dublin, College, Dublin 2. Telephone inquiries: 653444, extension 431. The latest date for receipt of completed applications is Thursday, 24th January, 1980.

### HAMPSHIRE

#### COUNTY LIBRARIAN

£18,000-£19,800 per annum. The post is based at County Headquarters in the historic city of Winchester and is responsible to the Recreation Committee for the management and development of the County's Library service to the County's population of some 1.1 million. The County Librarian acts as the principal professional adviser to the Recreation Committee and other advisory bodies. The annual budget is approximately £5 million and the service is provided by a staff of over 800 through 70 library buildings and some 200 other service points. A Chartered Librarian is required, who has had relevant experience at a senior level and who can demonstrate wide professional and managerial competence. Job description and application forms available from the Head of Manpower Services, The Castle, Winchester, Hampshire, and returnable by 20th February, 1980.

### IMPERIAL CANCER RESEARCH FUND Assistant Librarian

This is a new post for a qualified Librarian/Information Scientist interested in helping to improve computerized services to a busy biomedical research library. Applicants should have a science degree and experience in a medical or scientific library. Experience with computers would be an advantage although further training in the computer aspects of the work will be possible once in post. Salary range: £5,225 to £6,800. Five weeks holiday. Pension Scheme.

For further information and application form write to telephone to Miss S. M. Hurley, Imperial Cancer Research Fund, Lincoln's Inn Fields, London, WC2. Telephone 242 0265, Ext. 305.

## Information Assistant Market Research

BPC is an organisation of 50 subsidiary companies engaged in printing, publishing and paper conversion with a small Head Office in London, where we are currently seeking to recruit a young person to assist the Market Research on behalf of our subsidiary companies. The principle duties of this position would involve gathering information on markets, technical developments, customers, competitors etc., from financial and trade journals and external organisations to build up a central information base; information classification and retrieval for reports and investigations; and also clerical work—including typing of letters and reports. The salary will be between £4,000 and £4,500 p.a. according to age and experience. The company does provide interest free season ticket loans and gives luncheon vouchers at the rate of 45p per day. Please phone for application form to Mrs. I. Robinson, BPC Limited, 44 Great Queen Street, London WC2B 5AS. 01-240 3411.

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Applications are invited from suitably qualified persons for the above-mentioned post. The successful applicant must be prepared to establish a restoration section de novo, and will be required to undertake the restoration of books, collections of graphics, documents, etc. The successful applicant must have at least three years' training at a restoration centre or similar institution must be submitted. A thorough knowledge of systematic restoration methods, especially in the field of paper restoration, is an essential requirement. The salary and conditions of service will be determined according to qualifications and practical experience. Travelling and transportation costs will be paid. Applicants with the customary supporting documents must reach Ellen van Renobing, Civil Service Officer, South African Embassy, Taitelberg Square, London WC2N 5DP. Not later than 15 February, 1980.



### HOUSE OF COMMONS LIBRARY Library Attendants

This library has two vacancies for Attendants. This is the lowest grade of library staff and duties include carrying books and messages, filing newspapers and other material, re-shelving material, tidying and maintaining, and photocopying. Candidates must be under 25 years of age, and must be of good character, accuracy and physical fitness are important. Preferred age 21 to 35. The posts are permanent and non-graduate after probation. Salary £4,207 to £4,596 p.a., plus a half-day allowance at £745 p.a. for late duty to 10 p.m. one night a week. (The late duty will come into operation in April.) There may be future promotion prospects for suitable candidates. Good references will be required. Selection by interview. Apply for further details and application form to Esprit/Manpower Office, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA. Telephone 81-210 5944 after 10 a.m. Closing date for return of applications, January 24, 1980.

### Cheshire

#### Director of Libraries and Museums £14,196-£15,249

This post falls vacant in March 1980 as a result of the appointment of Mr. Alexander Wilson as Director of the Reference Division of the British Library. Applicants should be Chartered Librarians with extensive experience of library management at a senior level. An involvement with arts and museums activities would be an added advantage. The salary scale is subject to a comparability study. Retention expenses will be paid in accordance with the Council's scale. Application and further particulars from The Principal Personnel Officer, Cheshire County Council, County Hall, Chester, CH1 1BS. Closing date 23rd January, 1980.